

MAY 8 - 2001

Memorandum
by Council Legislative Office

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mark Linder
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SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: April 30, 2001

Approved



Date

05.07.01

INFORMATION

**SUBJECT: GREATER CUSTOMER SERVICE TO HOUSING DEVELOPERS
(HOUSING PRODUCTION TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS #33, 34, 35 and
63)**

BACKGROUND

Last September, in response to concerns about housing availability and affordability, the Mayor created a Housing Production Team to develop specific goals, recommendations and actions to increase housing production in San Jose. On January 16, 2001, the City Council accepted the report from the Mayor's Housing Production Team and referred it to the Administration for response. Four of the recommendations included in the report request that departments take steps to improve internal coordination of housing developments in an effort to provide better customer service to developers. These recommendations are:

- Greater Customer Service Among Departments (HPT Recommendation #33)
- Housing, RDA and CDBG Need to be Better Coordinated (HPT Recommendation #34)
- Interdepartmental Staff Task Force Responsible for Fast-Tracking Infill Sites (HPT Recommendation #35)
- Team of Internal Advocates for Projects (HPT Recommendation #63)

This report responds to these recommendations.

ANALYSIS

The City has implemented a number of steps to provide improved customer service to housing developers, particularly those proposing the development of affordable housing. These steps include the implementation of a Housing Action Team (HAT Team), which meets regularly to discuss pending affordable housing projects, resolve issues of concern, and keep projects on track. The HAT Team is made up of staff from the departments of Housing, Public Works, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) and Fire. Other City departments and the Redevelopment Agency attend on a project-by-project basis.

Additionally, per City Council Policy, the City designates all affordable housing projects "special handling" status, which assigns them the highest priority for review and requires that staff track their progress to ensure continued movement of the project through the development review process. The designation of all affordable housing projects as Special Handling increases the number of projects with this designation, as all major job-generating projects are also designated Special Handling. These include the campuses for Cisco, Palm, Agelient, Equinex, and the Valley Fair, Santana Row, and the Oakridge and Eastridge Malls.

Despite these positive steps, a number of challenges remain. The most significant of these challenges is staffing. Filling job vacancies has been difficult in this tight job market; often, new hires need considerable training and technical assistance to familiarize themselves with City regulations and processes. Additionally, the number of projects that are designated as Special Handling has increased in recent years. Training of the new staff on what Special Handling means and how to watch for projects that should be designated as such is important to improving this part of the process. Lastly, technology that enables departments to track projects through the entire development process has not been available to date. The IDTS project will help significantly to solve this problem.

To respond to the HPT recommendations and aforementioned constraints, the Administration has taken a number of steps. First, it assigned the recommendations to the Economic and Neighborhood Development (END) City Service Area Team for coordination and response. Secondly, it pulled together a group of developers to obtain outside feedback on the customer service being provided by the City and suggestions for improvements. As a result of these discussions, we have identified the following improvements.

1. END CSA Team as a Coordinating Entity—the END CSA Team is made up of a number of departments, including Housing, PBCE, Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), and the Redevelopment Agency. This team meets weekly to discuss housing and economic development issues and concerns. The issue of interdepartmental coordination and improved customer service to our housing developers will be a regular subject of these meetings.
2. Increased Staffing (HPT Recommendations #55 and 62)—as mentioned above, staffing shortages and the need for training new staff have inhibited our provision of service. The departments of PBCE, Public Works, and Fire have all submitted budget proposals to add staff to improve the service level provided to housing developers. Consistent with HPT

Recommendations #55 and 62, 19 positions are being proposed in PBCE. These positions are included in Investment Proposal #4). Additionally, the Administration has convened a SWAT Team on Hiring to address recruitment issues for hard-to-recruit positions such as planners and building inspectors. Several actions have already been implemented to bring in qualified candidates for such positions.

3. Revised Predevelopment Loan Process (HPT Recommendation #41)—after receiving feedback from developers, the Housing Department is prepared to recommend changes to its Predevelopment Loan Program Process. These changes will be sent to the City Council under separate cover within the next 30 days. Other changes in response to feedback from developers are included in a memo to the City Council sent under separate cover.
4. Coordination Between the Housing Department, CDBG, and the Redevelopment Agency (HPT Recommendation #34)—The Housing Department, the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department and the Redevelopment Agency are committed to working together on projects that are jointly funded. When feasible, the entity with the largest funding commitment will take the lead, and funds can be handled by the lead agency.
5. Improved Technology—The Integrated Development Tracking System, which is nearing completion, will allow staff to share common information about all development projects. This will allow the status and outstanding issues to be reviewed as well as flag any special needs of a project, such as Special Handling for affordable housing projects. The IDTS project is expected to be fully implemented by year end, starting with Building this summer, Planning in September and Public Works shortly behind.
6. Increased Training Opportunities – The development review staff throughout the organization have a continuing need for training on a variety of topics. This need is highlighted by the number of new staff hired by the City. Recent examples include bringing a two-day UC Extension course on the CEQA process to the City to allow all project managers and supervisors in Planning, as well as staff from other departments, to have the opportunity to fully learn the intricacies of CEQA legislation. Similar sessions are planned for this spring on Planning Law and Subdivision Law. Building and Planning staff both attend regularly scheduled training sessions to provide in house training opportunities. Additional funding for training has been requested in the budget to ensure that we have staff in all the development review areas that are fully versed in the required topic areas.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Not applicable.

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Subject: Greater Customer Service Between Departments

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COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the Economic and Neighborhood Development City Service Area Team, the Redevelopment Agency, and the Office of the City Attorney.



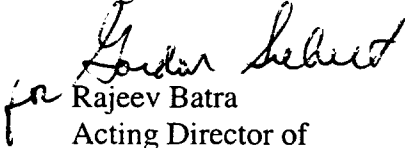
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